

# UPDATE

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

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## Albemarle County's Weatherbusters teach senior citizens disaster preparedness

**L**ook out Norman Schwartzkopf — “Senior Weatherbusters: Operation Winter Storm” has taken over Albemarle County. This innovative program is the first installment of an ongoing campaign designed to teach senior citizens how to emotionally and physically prepare for a disaster or emergency.

“We initially developed this program to assist our senior citizens to prepare for disasters — to be able to survive for one to three days on their own,” said Kaye Harden, Albemarle’s emergency services coordinator.

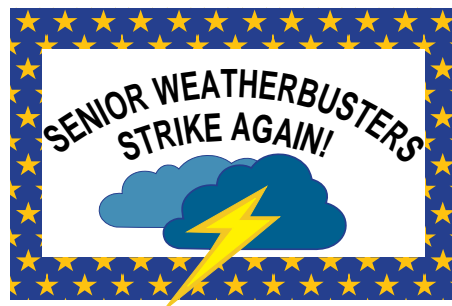
This past fall, Harden, the county police chief, the community relations officer and representatives from the Senior Advisory Council, the local Red Cross chapter and Virginia Power put together a simple, hour-long presentation on severe cold weather that they delivered to senior groups around the county.

The presentation included a packet of educational materials and home and car survival kits designed to fit the specialized needs and physical limitations of seniors. Speakers have covered topics ranging from winter driving tips to ways to keep warm at home should the power go out. During one presentation, a representative from the Humane Society discussed disaster preparedness for pets. The speaker encouraged senior citizens to arrange ahead of time to have their pets cared for should they need to evacuate their homes.

The group worked with local grocery, hardware and department stores which advertised the Weatherbusters message through signs, posters and displays. Some of the businesses put together displays of “Weatherbuster” disaster

supply kits and passed out “survival checklists” to their customers.

The program received significant support from the local media, which ran



news stories and public service announcements that brought the program to the attention of the general public. As the program evolves throughout the year, preparedness information will change to focus on current weather threats and dangers.

Seniors not only learned the necessary emotional and physical survival skills, they volunteered to assist in disaster response. “As a part of this program, I asked for volunteers to staff our information/rumor control lines during a disaster,” said Harden. “During the January, 1996, blizzard, we used this line for the first time. The seniors took a lot of calls from people with special problems. They matched up requests for transportation with our available four-wheel vehicles, passed along information about road closings, called individuals who lived alone to check up on them and offered phone numbers for people who needed additional resources. This worked out really well for us because they took some of the load off the 911 center and helped

the community.”

The program is extremely cost-effective for the county. Other than salaries for employees involved in the program, the only additional funding was used to cover the cost of supplies and press kits.

Harden has about 14 volunteers at this point, but is working to increase the number to 25. Once the pool of volunteers is complete, Harden plans to conduct training sessions for participants.

“This program gave me resources I didn’t have before,” said Harden. “For me, setting up an information/rumor control line was extremely helpful and worth the effort. From the standpoint of the emergency services manager, this kind of public education and volunteerism reduces the need for emergency response.”

For information on this program, call Public Affairs Coordinator Lee Catlin at 804/296-5841.

## Hurricane Preparedness Campaign moves to June

Get your citizens ready for the upcoming hurricane season. The Hurricane Preparedness Campaign, normally held in July, has been moved up to the first week of June.

Look for your Hurricane Preparedness Campaign materials in early May and start planning your public outreach strategies. Call the VDES Public Information Office at 804/674-2499 if you have questions.

# Virginia Beach firefighter authors risk management book

**I**f you're looking for a good book on risk management, the one you'll want to browse through is coauthored by a Virginian. Capt. Murrey Loflin, safety officer for the Virginia Beach Fire Department, and Jonathan D. Kipp, a certified safety professional, have recently written a book titled,

*Emergency Incident Risk Management*. Available through a major publishing firm, the book offers detailed information on developing risk management programs that protect both public safety workers and citizens.

The authors don't stop at program

development, however. They explain ways to put your program in action by applying risk management principles to firefighting operations and other types of situations. "Two of the areas we focus on are the Incident Command System and safety for the first responder," said Loflin. "We offer tools and ideas so that readers can put together a program that works for them."

You'll get information on how to identify and evaluate risk; establish risk management priorities; formulate and implement a sound risk management program; and incorporate risk management into an incident management system.

The book also addresses federal

standards that safety managers must observe in addition to OSHA regulations and NFPA standards as these apply to hazmat and fire services.

For information, call Capt. Murrey Loflin at 757/427-4228 or order a copy of the book by calling 800/842-3636, email: [lcabrera@vnr.com](mailto:lcabrera@vnr.com)



## Pennsylvania county proposes communications solution

**H**ow would you resolve this problem? Your county's emergency response system operates out of a patchwork of eight scattered dispatch centers that service a county-wide population of 250,000. Between them, the centers are accessed through 30 different seven-digit telephone numbers, rather than the standard 911 number. The risk is that one day emergency response will be too slow, resulting in unnecessary deaths or property damage.

This situation was the real-life challenge faced by Bill Brackenbill, county executive for Northampton County in eastern Pennsylvania. In a recent article in *Governing* magazine Brackenbill described the solution. The county decided to privatize their emergency response system and pay an outside vendor to create and operate an enhanced 911 system.

Under a 10-year contract with MCI Systemhouse, the county is not responsible for system equipment procurement, maintenance and operation. Dispatchers

working in the new system will receive 120 hours of training. In addition, the county anticipates getting up to three technological upgrades over the 10-year period.

The program's \$42 million cost will be funded through a permanent charge of \$1.25 a month on all residential and business telephone lines, subject to approval by the state. An agreement is also being worked out under which all municipalities in the county will pay a \$5 per resident, per year user fee.

"At this point, we're looking at an April/May time frame to get this system online," said Brackenbill. "We will have a professional outfit running a communications center and this will save the county a tremendous amount in personnel cost." He pointed out that if the county had tried to finance their own program with a bond, the system equipment would be obsolete before the bond was paid off.

For more information, call Bill Brackenbill at 610/559-3191.



If you want to get a feel for what's happening in emergency management at the national level, tune in to EENET's new broadcast, "National Alert." Regularly scheduled for the third Wednesday of each month, this 90-minute program includes monthly segments on the current "hot topic" in emergency management, training features produced by a national network of fire, police, EMS and emergency management and the latest news from the Emergency Management Institute.

Get the straight scoop from FEMA and other federal agencies on emergency management activities, problems and issues nationwide. As a bonus, the last 30 minutes of the program provides training videos, PSAs and other tools you can use for different public education and training programs in your locality.

### **EENET Schedule:**

**April 16**

**"National Alert" Broadcast  
2-3:30 p.m.**

**May 5**

**Establishing a Family Assistance  
Center Following a Mass Fatality  
2:30-4:30 p.m.**

For satellite coordinates or further information, call 800/527-4893, 301/447-1068 or email: [sdownin@fema.gov](mailto:sdownin@fema.gov)

# HAZ MAT



## Hazard commonly found around state

**T**here are billions of them across the country and they present major hazards to nearby communities. In Virginia, between 17 and 21 million make up about 731 piles around the state. What are they? They're waste tires disposed of in piles which have become part of the modern American landscape. Remediating this problem presents particular challenges to local hazmat coordinators.

"In 1983, we had a major tire pile fire in Winchester," said John Conover, Certified Hazardous Materials Manager (CHMM) and analytical chemist for the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). "The pile contained probably five to seven million tires and about half of those burned."

In fact, the pile burned for nine months and cost the state about \$4 million. The tires released so much oil — about a million gallons worth — tanker trucks were brought in to haul the oil away. The fire was initially suppressed with water which created millions of gallons of runoff that affected the purity of nearby streams. This incident was the first of its type in the state and its magnitude highlighted the need for a hazardous materials

program at the state level that could support and enhance local resources.

Lessons learned from this fire came into play six years later when a tire pile caught fire in Wakefield. "The concept in fighting the fire there was to cut off its oxygen and smother it," said VDES

Acting Hazardous Materials

Field Manager, Greg

Britt. "Clay was brought in and the fire was capped.

If the locality has the resources to fight a tire pile fire in this way, this technique is very

effective because it doesn't create runoff that could effect nearby streams or rivers."

Roanoke County Deputy Fire Chief, Willie Howlett, identified two major areas of concern for incident commanders dealing with tire fires. "Besides the strategic and tactical concerns related to suppressing the fire, we need to address the environmental concerns as well."

He pointed out some issues to consider. Will the petroleum runoff enter waterways leading to rivers or water intakes? Are there any livestock downstream that would be impacted? In which direction is the smoke going to blow and what communities will be

affected? How will soil contamination impact the area? Will a significant fire generate forest fires? And finally, how will dealing with the environmental issues impact fire suppression issues?

"It's important for the

hazmat coordinator to identify the tire pile sites in their locality and preplan how they would deal with possible tire fires," said Howlett.

(Next month: Tactics for remediation.)

## Mark your calendars: NASAR Conference comes to Richmond

Are you in search of people who love dogs, the outdoors and physical and mental challenges of all types? Look no further than the annual National Association for Search And Rescue (NASAR) Conference coming to Richmond May 28-31.

SAR experts from all over the country will converge in Virginia for four days of networking, workshops, hands-on training, demonstrations and some good, old-fashion fun. This year's conference features seven speakers from Virginia's SAR community. They are:

■ Robert Koester from Charlottesville, will talk about fatigue and SAR safety;

■ Gary E. Morin, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, will explain techniques for removing injured people from both urban and wilderness settings;

■ Jim Strickland, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, and Tom Carr, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue, will review SAR operations during Hurricane Fran;

■ Beth Barkley from Falls Church will talk about "reading" a search dog's body language;

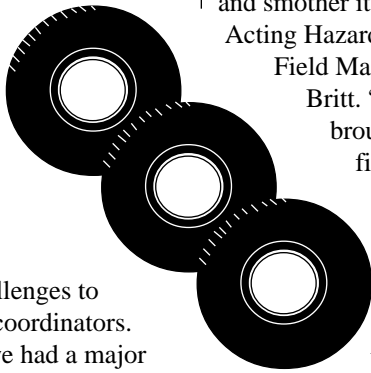
■ Steve McConaughy will discuss ways to manage search segment sizes to increase the chances of finding victims;

■ David Carter from Norfolk will describe the skills needed to integrate planning and operations into the first and second shifts of a missing person search; and

■ Winnie Pennington, VDES state SAR coordinator, will examine Virginia's state SAR program.

In addition, Virginia's volunteer SAR community has developed a search and rescue Olympics demonstration that provides the opportunity for some friendly competition. "This is a unique event and has never been offered before at the conference," said Pennington. "It's designed to be fun as well as a learning experience. In fact, the conference offers four days of valuable information that can be used by everyone involved in SAR operations in the state."

For more information about the conference, call NASAR at 703/222-6277.



## TRAINING



### Introduction to Emergency Management

April 23-25  
Williamsburg

### Overview of Incident Command System

May 7  
Williamsburg

### Incident Command System/ Emergency Operations Center Interface

May 8-9  
Williamsburg

### Disaster Recovery Operations

May 21-23  
Wytheville

### Overview of Incident Command System

June 3  
Dublin

### Incident Command System/ Emergency Operations Center Interface

June 4  
Dublin

For information, call the  
VDES Training Office at  
804/674-2458

### Technological Hazards Division

#### Advanced Hazardous Materials Control

April 14-18  
Ashland

#### Chemistry of Hazardous Materials

May 12-23  
Chesterfield

For information, call the  
VDES Tech Haz Division at  
804/674-2510

#### Cameo Training Workshop

May 12-13  
Salem

#### Hospital Emergency Room Decontamination Class

May date to be announced  
Roanoke/Salem area

For information, call George  
Roarty at 804/674-2708

Bring your dogs to this event! The Virginia Bloodhound Search and Rescue Association and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office will be holding a seminar for mantrailing bloodhounds and their handlers. The course is scheduled from July 7-11 in Loudoun. For information, call DFC Terry Davis at 703/777-0408.

## Conference addresses highway disaster response

**Fact:** Almost every major disaster, emergency or hazmat incident, whether localized or widespread, will either directly or indirectly impact a jurisdiction's transportation network.

**Fact:** Understanding traffic engineering strategies and incident management concepts will enable you to effectively manage incidents involving transportation networks.

**Fact:** By attending the "Virginia's Second Biennial Statewide Workshop on Incident Management," you'll arm yourself with the facts you need to know as a public safety official responding to incidents involving your locality's transportation network.

The workshop will be held June 5-8 in Charlottesville and costs a mere \$15 per person. Sponsors include the Federal Highway Administration, VDOT, VDES, the State Police and other public and private sector organizations.

Participants will have the opportunity to network with traffic engineers, law enforcement, fire and rescue, tow truck operators and others. Sessions include an introduction to the Virginia Operational Information System and discussion of the concepts of a unified incident command structure. The last day of the workshop is devoted to continuing education and training in hazmat, EMS and fire services.

"In the past, typical traffic engineering processes concentrated on designing good highways," said George Foresman, VDES assistant state coordinator for operations. "Today's traffic engineering process includes everything from roadway design to signage to working with public safety people in the event of the inevitable incident. By attending this workshop, emergency managers will gain a better understanding of the strategies used by the wide range of groups that respond to an incident involving highway systems. This knowledge will enable them to better coordinate their own emergency response planning."

For registration information, call Barbara Turner at 804/293-1966.



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